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LETTER

OF

REV. TRESHAM D. GREGG, A.M.,

TO THE

CHURCHWARDENS AND PARISHIONERS

OF ST. NICHOLAS WITHIN, DUBLIN.

DUBLIN :

KEENE, COLLEGE-GREEN; OLDHAM, SUFFOLK-STREET;
CARSON, GRAFTON-STREET.

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TO THE
CHURCH WARDENS AND PARISHIONERS
OF
ST. NICHOLAS WITHIN, DUBLIN.

BELoved FRIENDS AND BRETHREN IN CHRIST—I feel myself called upon to lay before you, a statement with respect to a wanton outrage this day attempted on me—an outrage which, while it affects me, involves a distinct invasion of your peculiar rights.

To you, beloved in the Lord, and to your kind appreciation of my humble services, I stand indebted for my ecclesiastical position.

Had it pleased God to leave me without a position in the Church, I should not feel myself warranted to mix myself up with public questions, nor to concern myself about their bearing on the Church's interests. When I was for a while without an appointment, I abstained from public exertion, and left it to others to maintain the cause which we all have so much at heart, considering that the clergyman was, in some sort, put out of the fight, who was not furnished with a lawful place in the host. To you, beloved, I owe my position ; and I can appeal to my public labours as to whether I have not, with all my mind, and all my strength, struggled to counteract the pressing evils of these days.

The position to which you elected me, was that of Chaplain of the Chapel of St. Mary, within our parish church. You are painfully aware that that church is in ruins, and with it my chapel ; and that although I expended labour and time, and much anxious thought,

in conjunction with you, as well as apart, in order to have our church rebuilt, we have been encountered by some sinister influence at the Board of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, which has, hitherto, frustrated our purpose. Were we allowed to rebuild the church ourselves, I have no hesitation in saying that, before twelve months would elapse, the liberality of the Protestant public would supply us with ample means to restore it in more than its original beauty. Perhaps, under God, however improbable it may seem, the circumstances to which I am now about to call your attention may lead to this result. Dilapidated as our church and chapel have been since I was elected to the benefice, without adequate means of efficiently carrying out our educational and other charities, I have felt myself more in the line of my duty in endeavouring to arouse public opinion on the subject of our manifold grievances, than in fruitlessly expending my strength in working with a broken instrument. Still, for the last six years, I have performed Divine Service in the parish school-room, which represents the parish church (as also, of course, the chapel of Saint Mary), without let, hindrance, or molestation. Shortly after my induction, I felt myself called upon to inform the Archbishop of Dublin, that having ascertained that the Chapel of St. Mary constituted an "exempt jurisdiction," the incumbent of which was not under his Grace's control, I should perform my functions without a licence from his Grace, for as much as I was subject to, and, consequently, licensed by, another ordinary. Accordingly I have ever since so done, making it a point to see your face from week to week.

You are aware, I again repeat, of the nature and character of my public labours. They were not done in a corner. I supplied you with the means of knowing my life, my conversation, and almost my secret thoughts.

I thank God to be enabled to say that my influence for good was extending daily. Despite of every effort to crush, discourage, and discountenance me—to exclude me from eminence and frown me into contempt, the truths that I have been telling have been gaining ground, the friends who stood with me have been increasing their numbers, and from every rank of society. And now—ay, now!—what now?

You shall hear.

Two days ago somebody told me—no matter who—it was a “bird in the air,” perhaps—that Mr. Cradock, who is the perpetual curate of the parish, had been sent for to the Palace in “great haste,” and was informed that as I was not licensed by the Archbishop, I had no right to perform Divine service in the parish school-house, because that school-house represented the parish church, over which the Archbishop exercised control, and that therefore I should be impeded in the performance of my duty. What a discovery after six years’ deliberation! What a great pity it was, however, that there was not some logician from Oxford to the fore, or if not a logician a rhetorician, or if not a rhetorician a metaphysician, or if not a metaphysician, or an economical politician, a philosopher of some sort or description, who could have hinted to his Grace that the parish school-house represented another thing also, namely, your chapel and mine, over which the Archbishop has no manner of control whatsoever—within which I exercise my functions under a royal charter, by which charter I am placed under a jurisdiction totally distinct from that of the Archbishop. What a pity it was that all this was not thought of! However, I was given to understand that when I should go on Friday (this day) to perform my duty, I should encounter difficulty, and I prepared myself accordingly. Arrived at the usual

hour at the school-house, I found the congregation gathered, and, upon entering the building, the following dialogue occurred :—

Parish Clerk—" Mr. Gregg, I am desired to ask whether you have got a licence to perform Divine service here ?"

Chaplain—" I have."

Parish Clerk—" Is it from the Archbishop, sir ?"

Chaplain—" No ; it is from the Ordinary of the chapel of St. Mary, within which the Archbishop has no control."

Parish Clerk—" Well, sir, I am desired to say, that you cannot perform Divine Service here, without the Archbishop's licence. This letter, from the Rev. Mr. Cradock, will show you the authority under which I act :—

' Mr. Wood—I am distinctly apprised that if any unlicensed person officiates in any way in the school-house in which Divine service is at present performed by licence of his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, that licence will be immediately withdrawn from me.

' I, in consequence, give you strict injunctions not to admit any person to officiate unless he produce a licence from the Archbishop of Dublin.

' 5th February, 1846.

' (Signed)

' T. R. CRADOCK, Incumbent.

' To Mr. Wood, Nicholas Within.'

Chaplain—" Then against the pretensions put forward in that letter I hereby enter my protest."

I then read the protest, of which the following is a copy :—

" P R O T E S T .

" I, the Rev. Tresham Dames Gregg, Master of Arts, Chaplain of the Chapel of St. Mary, within the Church of St. Nicholas, within the walls of the city of Dublin, do hereby denounce the act of the Archbishop of Dublin or his agents, in presuming to offer let or impediment to me in the exercise of my lawful functions as such chaplain of Saint Nicholas Within, and declare any such attempt on the part of the Archbishop, or of any acting on his behalf, to be grossly tyrannical, wrongful and injurious. And

I do hereby enter my protest against any such attempt of the said Archbishop as unwarranted and illegal, inasmuch as my benefice and chapel belong to an exempt jurisdiction, over which, and the Incumbent thereof, the said Archbishop hath no control; and I do, therefore, enter this school-room, which represents the parish church of St. Nicholas Within, within which my chapel is situate, AS OF RIGHT; and I do hereby perform Divine service therein, as to me it doth lawfully belong to do, HEREBY ASSERTING MY RIGHT, TITLE, AND PREROGATIVE TO PERFORM MY FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE SAID CHAPEL OF ST. MARY, WITHIN THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS WITHIN, as aforesaid, on the SOLE WARRANT AND LICENCE of my appointment to the Chaplaincy of said chapel by the proctors and parishioners of the said parish of St. Nicholas Within—the lawful and undoubted patrons thereof—without leave asked, or licence had, of the said Archbishop, or of any other, save the proctors and parishioners as aforesaid, and in disregard of the authority, power, and pretensions of the said Archbishop, or of any person or persons acting for, or by his orders, when said authority would presume, contrary to law, equity, justice, the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen, the sacred rights of Christ's holy church, and the statutes of this realm in such case made and provided, to impede me in the exercise of my duty, or invade the lawful rights, privileges, or prerogatives to me appertaining; and this I do, saving always all lawful subjection to the said Archbishop, and all the lawful authorities.

“Witness my hand this sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-six.

“(Signed)

“T. D. GREGG.”

When I had finished the reading of the protest, advancing to the door of my chapel—of the Chapel of St. Mary, within the parish church of St. Nicholas Within, mark!—your chapel, my chapel, our private chapel—for such I will call the school-room—I say, proceeding to our private chapel, I found that some bold and daring invader of my rights, and of your rights, had presumed to fix a padlock on the door, which I instantly wrenched off (I might just as properly have padlocked Christ's Church, St. Patrick's, or the Archbishop's Palace), and entering in with the congregation performed the usual service; yes, beloved, and enjoyed in the performance, a precious sense of the triumph of right and justice over wrong and malignity. The psalms of the day seemed to me as if they had been selected for the occasion: “I will magnify thee, O Lord, for thou hast set me up, and not made my foes to

triumph over me." "In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust ; let me never be put to confusion." "For thou art my strong rock and my castle ; be thou also my guide, and lead me for thy name's sake." "Draw me out of the net that they have laid privily for me, for thou art my strength." "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy ; but hast set my feet in a large room," &c.

I assure you that this language, and much of a kindred character, had, for me, a very consoling effect.

I shall terminate my narrative here for the present. It shall be my business to take the very earliest opportunity of summoning my friends—the friends of liberty and of order, and the enemies of odious malignity and proud oppression—in order to go into the detail of many circumstances connected with the outrage and the insult with which it was attempted to visit me. Had I tamely submitted, both would have been realized ; but I have tried submission, and have discovered this—that mean and ignoble spirits are only rendered thereby more tyrannical and overbearing. I humbled myself once to the Archbishop of Dublin, and he spat upon me. He had then on his side the semblance of right—I allude to the Swift's-alley Free Church case—with respect to which, and the whole case between the Archbishop and myself, I refer you to the first monthly part of "Free Thoughts on Protestant Matters." He is now flagrantly in the wrong ; and that I should, in such a case, submit to him were to injure at once myself and my successors, the parish, the Archbishop, and the Church—a thing which, by God's help, I will not do.

I remain, beloved brethren, your obliged and very faithful servant,

T. D. GREGG.